



# "Analysis of Feminism, Social Class and Equality in Jane Eyre "

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## 1.0. Abstract

The novel by Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, demonstrates the problems women face in a patriarchic society and their struggle for gender equality. Feminism theories are still a big area of focus whether in books, films or just discussions. Notably though today society perspective men tend to have more powers over women. The research aims at discussing feminism theory in a book titled, “*Jane Eyre*”. The character development is very intense though there is no meaningful conflict but it is worth concentrating on. This may be an attempt on the part of the writer to make readers pity Eyre. Jane Eyre was the object of study as the main female character of this novel. This book was analyzed using qualitative descriptive method as a methodology and it’s written by Allison M Jagar who used feminist theory to analyze it. In this approach, Ali claims that fundamentally there are equal shares between men and women who are treated with equality according to gender.

In practice, men are always regarded as superior to women. This is the case in matters such as education, profession or occupation. The attempt by the researcher in this study was to show that women can also excel in various aspects, women are independent and women are at par with men

## 2.0.Introduction

Feminist thought as presented by Engels, (Narwoko and Suyanto 2010) reveals that according to the Marxist theory, gender roles develop through a complex process of socialization, reinforcement and the influences of cultural, religious, and state structures. The Minister of Women Empowerment’s modules on understanding gender are closely connected with notions of equality—a condition in which there is balance and equal opportunities.

The term “equality” means equilibrium and fairness in this context because it goes beyond just absence of prejudice but having no weight meaning parity and justice. This is about gender equality in political arena such as legal systems, economic systems, socio-cultural institutions such as education and national security system for both men and women. It’s also concerned with the structural injustices towards men and women that are rooted in discrimination.

In literature, one of the most discussed topics is *Jane Eyre*, a timeless classic by Charlotte Bronte, the oldest of the three Bronte sisters. Bronte’s novel explores the difficulties faced by sisters in a deprived family system

that had lost their mother at an early age as it portrays Jane Eyre as an ordinary lady who is strong in character. In her novels, Charlotte Bronte was able to express her personal opinions on various issues such as femininity and marriage even though she was influenced by societal expectations and personal experiences. “Jane Eyre” is considered one of Bronte’s finest works, which depicts the search for true love while incorporating some qualities like intelligence and self-assertion.

The feminist perspective is a vital tool for interpreting literary works whose main aim is to unveil the subordinate position of women and interrogate unfair economic and political systems. This approach is dominant in modern literary theory as it has emerged globally following realization that women are equal to men in terms of rights. Feminist studies can take different forms endeavoring to embrace women’s literary traditions, female writers, readership practices, language properties used among others. For instance, when looking at “Jane Eyre,” scholars perform multiple examinations.

Dr. B. Janaki’s research concludes that Jane’s narrative is meant to challenge the oppression of patriarchy by Bronte, stressing gender equality and the assertion of individualization. Similarly, Cristina Budeanu examines the novel through a feminist lens, linking women’s experiences in Victorian times with those of their contemporaries. Widya Firmanilla Mentari uses liberal feminism theory to stress Jane’s independence as against liberal feminist ideals. Consequently, these studies collectively comprise a multifaceted analysis that entails historical, social and cultural perspectives in order to unveil gender issues in Bronte’s work.

Finally, this research inquiry looks at the features of Feminism Criticism within the Victorian context which leads to exploring the cultural making of gender roles and relations. It aims at recognizing, describing and unfolding intricacies of Feminism Criticism in Charlotte Bronte’s literary jewel “Jane Eyre”.

## 2.1. Objectives

The main purpose of this research is to find out how the concept of feminism has been addressed in two important English literature classics when turned into theater. These include the play Jane Eyre- A New Musical by Richard, and Little Women – A Comedy in Four Acts by De Forest. The research will determine if these adaptations either challenge or conform themselves to the patriarchal system. This means that one hopes to exhibit the rapport between adaptation and feminism. Moreover, the other objectives for this research are:

- a. To evaluate these adaptations (the context and story adapted).
- b. To investigate major female characters in these plays.
- c. To explore motherhood, marriage, housekeeping as well as gender identity within those performances on stage.

## 3.0. Hypothesis

This essay therefore looks at the connection between two stage adaptations of Jane Eyre and Little Women and feminism, as both works contain strong-willed, self-reliant, unusual female characters. This means that we have these questions to answer: How do feminist classics in English Literature get transformed for the stage? Do they resist and subvert patriarchy with a feminist approach as seen in novels; or do they endorse it in order to fit into the dominant sexist ideology so as to gain more audience and hence make more business?

### 3.1. Analysis of Jane Eyre

To evaluate Jay Richards’ feminist perspective in the stage adaptation of Jane Eyre. I will highlight upon the context and key issues that was also used in the previous context to discuss Marian de Forest’s Little Women adaptation.

- Context

Richards’ adaptation’s context involves analyzing a historic context and a literary context. To make these

changes I will provide both an interpretation from the novel and a theater piece. In England, *Jane Eyre* by Brontë is set during the Victorian era, times when there were crises in society and progress made by people who have written about them like Brontë.

Furthermore, through their countless colonies this country became a great empire with enormous riches for the British people. In addition to this, the UK underwent profound change due to industrial revolution where manufacturing income enabled it emerge as one of the greatest economies on earth. The rising middle class took advantage of these opportunities while a new working class sought better conditions for work and life (Richards 69). It can be said that in her novel many different variations and complaints have been raised concerning various developments of that time in society as such better educational opportunities as well as working atmosphere; however, most reforms were aimed at men.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the play premiered in 2013 at the Ellen Eccles Theatre, Logan UT, USA, which is set against a historical backdrop. At present feminism had several victories behind itself and was in its fourth stage of Internet activism and echoing voices from some earlier second-wave feminists. Postmodernism is apparent from this. For example, feminist empowerment has to do with women's bodies in a way that expresses an assertion like Beyoncé or Shakira.

However, this means that capitalism takes advantage of their fleshly nature subsequently making profits out of them through consumption. As concerns fourth wave of feminism, it is important to underscore such mainstreaming as gay marriage legalization or public acceptance of transgender celebrities. Thus, affecting writing too, it has become so broad that there are no longer any plots or genres unique to it. Additionally, 'genderqueer' emerges – one can be neither male nor female again. When discussing ethnicity as a subject matter, a greater number of books have been done by women from developing countries following increased access to education.

When considering the literary context of Richard's theater adaptation, one should bear in mind that this is a musical as well. This kind of theatrical work is definitely one of the most popular and interesting genres in American theater, which was influenced by how democracy created a theatrical system in this country. Consequently, it must be a genre for all – the intellectual as well as the common person. The musicals of 2010s surprised many and often were based on other works such as books, films, or music albums.

In America, the most important musicals of the decade were *Memphis* (2010) and *Matilda the Musical* (2013), while such works as *The Lion King* (1997) or *Anastasia* (2017) are some of Europe's best-known productions (1997). Richards' adaptation is not just a musical but also a feminist play. It can be seen from Noelle Janaczewska's writing that despite Margaret Thatcher's conservatism in the 80s which prevailed above social realism in theatre feminist British drama continued to survive with some adapters such as Jay Richards.

- Key issues

In this section, after a brief review of the context of both Brontë's novel and Richards' theater adaptation concerning Richards' moral values construction regarding feminism. I will discuss marriage and family issues, the woman's place, gender roles, as well as motherhood. In this respect, it is interesting to compare Brontë and Richards' attitudes towards each of these problems.

### 3.2. Analysis of *Little Women*

This paper has been divided into context and key issues to begin with, in order to examine feminist approach towards this adaptation over the novel. For instance, firstly I will outline the background; a historical and literary context analysis will be provided. Following this, I will look at the differences between certain novels and their respective adaptations. Feminism in practice is dealt with in section three. Finally, some major themes are discussed from a feminist perspective in section four such as motherhood, marriage, private/public sphere and gender identity.

- Context

Both this novel and its theatrical adaptation will be examined from both perspectives. Alcott's *Little Women*, for instance, opens with the reader being introduced to the fag-end of America's Civil War. The conflict that occurred between northern and southern states because of abolition of slavery lasted four years, 1861-1865. Like the March girls' father, a lot of readers' fathers were away at war because almost every family was touched directly by the American Civil War.

The Gilded Age was marked by a rise in science, industrialization and social justice in America during this era. Moreover, many femininity ideals were prevalent during the last years of 19th century and early 20th century as evidenced in such works as *Searchlights on Health: Light on Dark Corners: A Complete Sexual Science and a Guide to Purity and Physical Manhood*.

That's why it was important for women at that moment to show off these qualities of femininity. Late nineteenth-century authors like Louisa May Alcott and other feminist writers challenged traditional models of gender identity and suggested alternative ideas about how women should behave and as well as their roles in society. As a result, the feminism emerged at this period, so the first feminist notions appeared in *Little Women*, which is based on Marian de Forest's stage adaptation published in 1912; these include socialism, industrialization, imperialism and WWI.

In this regard, feminism came of age at this point in time and thus led to the birth of the first feminists' wave. This was when the 'New Woman' emerged as a different female identity with new roles, open to men as well. Consequently, some legal changes took place such as the enactment of The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, which abolished 'coverture'. Additionally, this idea was illustrated by several social changes that included: invention of bicycles that gave women mobility and freedom; climbing down gender attire like tight corsets and high heels; or disappearance of spaces for respectable women such as tea rooms.

The novel *Little Women* belong to the literary context of both Romantic, and Transcendentalist literary period. Romanticism emphasized emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience. This will be demonstrated through discussing romantic elements in this book later on. By means of this New England Transcendentalism sprang up from the Romantic movement which held another view about selfhood. Alcott's family friends were also promoters of transcendentalist motion among them being Emerson who had "plain living and high thinking" as their slogan.

Therefore, Alcott was especially influenced by this literary philosophy. It laid more emphasis on the point that true self-reliance and independence make people better than anything else does; this is clearly seen from Jo's character and other feminist characters. In addition, transcendentalists believed that divine experience could be gained through daily life making Alcott's novel to revolve around every day domestic events.

The plays' historical context is different in conclusion of this section. Although De Forest's adaptation was set at the beginning of the twentieth century, a period marked by industrialization, imperialism, WWI and the beginnings of feminism in society and laws; it took place during a time when there was industrialization, imperialism, WWI and starting of feminist changes in society as well as laws.

In terms of literary context, *Little Women* as a novel can be classified into two periods Romantic age (emotions) and Transcendentalist Age (plain-seeming, self-reliant, independent literature about self), whereas its stage adaptation marks a shift between Melodramatic settings that featured sentimental dialogues, flat characters, romantic themes and domestic sceneries to Realistic tradition that used common characters, simple language everyday life themes, plain sets.

- Key Issues

How does this adapter construct moral values associated with women's lives? In order to understand these issues better it is necessary to look at Marian De Forest's background including her historical and literary contexts as well as her stage adaptation itself. Both wedding and private/public sphere are considered here. This would be achieved by comparing Alcott's ideas with those of De Forest on each topic.

## 4.0. Methodology

In this research, the method used is qualitative description. This method is explanatory because it provides a subject description of the study to be described. Therefore, in this research, a descriptive explanation will be carried out to examine the issue of feminism in this novel. Method in analyzing this book is using qualitative description method. Nevertheless, in practical terms men are always regarded as superior to women. This is well evident especially on educational disparities, occupation or profession among others. The main data used for this study was obtained from Bronte's novel called Jane Eyre.

When data is being collected, Feminism as an issue in this case is identified by readers extensively reading the full novel. Then they presented other evidence like earlier research, journals and movies to support previous studies. Then all that material should be gathered with a view of answering a question or theory on feminism through Charlotte Bronte's novels. Without a doubt, researchers have carefully read the novels or data which were already well thought out. And then the research data is broken up into various units or types. Based on this right methodology, all information is examined thoroughly. Therefore, after conducting one analysis, this research was interpreted as such in its heading. While analyzing our data, the researchers chose to use Allison's feminist theory. M. Jagar. The history of women's political participation can be traced back to ancient civilizations, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. The early women's rights movements, such as the suffrage movement in the United States and the fight for property rights, were influenced by women like Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. These movements were also influenced by global perspectives, with movements in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Post-World War I saw women's political activism and gains, including the extension of suffrage rights. The second wave of feminism, in the 1960s and 1970s, focused on issues like reproductive rights and gender equality. The global expansion of second wave feminism was discussed, with its impact on women's political participation and rights advocacy. The third wave of feminism emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, emphasizing intersectionality, diversity, and inclusivity. These movements have had a significant impact on legislative reforms, representation in political institutions, and broader cultural and social shifts.

## 4.1. Findings

As a public concept, the term gender refers to how people perceive and identify with male and female roles in society. Having an overall knowledge of gender variations between males and females is helpful in deciding what place in life woman should be. Gender is normally associated with the words, "he" and "she". Masculine takes its toll from women-like characteristics such as bold, muscle and first.

On the other hand, feminine has attributes like selflessly caring, timidly quiet and spicing. The definition of gender can change from one community to another and even be prototypes for change over time. In this chapter analysis, the author dissects various chapters in order to aid the researcher in interpreting the findings of this study. The chapter is broken down on issues pertaining to education is a struggle, what bad effects results from injustice at work place among women especially those who are always portrayed as inferior within our societies because of their sex roles or women's subordination due to cultural norms that sees them as submissive human beings which gives men total control over them then finally portrays independent women image in Jane.

### • Equality of Gender in education

In this chapter, I will analyze Jane's thinking and her life concerning education as a solution to gender equality which is also the essence of Jane Eyre written by Bronte in 1847. Justice and equality are simple ideas, goals, and the main purpose of human civilization to create prosperity through building harmony in social life within a state as well as finding quality families.

Human beings must be able to protect the rights of people. This can sometimes be seen in women development or independence. Education about gender equality means that women have equal rights to education with men and that they should be given the same chance like men do. Equal rights for all humans mean that women can be on the same level with men or enjoy equal status with them at any time. Jane is an intelligent independent

young woman who appears as a protagonist in this novel who has a keen sense of brutality created through education when she begins questing for gender equality.

*“Why did they send me so distant and so lonely*

*Up where the fields spread and dim rocks are heaped?*

*Men are hard-hearted, and kind blessed messengers as it were*

*Watch o’er the steps of a destitute vagrant child.”*

#### • **Equality of Gender in dominance of males**

Gender issues refer to such concerns as they affect wrongs which have negative impacts on women and, primarily, men. For instance, submission women are always second to men and the idea that they are incapable of leading end up putting them in a secondary position. Power means the stronger oppressing the weaker. Flontance & Paladi (1993) revealed that the difference in women’s and men roles is natural i.e. female anatomy different from male one becomes a main factor of social surrounding, then are more important to be considered as role

center Because society statutes them stronger,” full of potential”, and much more productive/ Domination refers to the power of the stronger over the weaker.

This study as an analysis material is a novel that can be considered to symbolize feminism, so in relation with the progress of this movement related to literature described by means of this novel. In the west world of literature, there is a division in men and women in terms of their contribution to literary work. This relates to men being more dominant and women considered objects.

*“You've got no business to require our books; you're a dependent, mama says; you've got no cash; your father cleared out you none; you have to be ask, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same suppers we do, wear clothes at our mama’s cost. Presently, I’ll instruct you to scrounge my bookshelves: for they ARE mine; all the house has a place to me, or will do in many a long time. Go and stand by the entryway, out of the way of the reflect and the windows.”*

#### • **Feminism and Self-dependent Woman**

It is expected that the question of who propounds a patriarchal hegemony can reinstate feminism as a more feminist solution, among these tools used in qualitative research that need to respond to social, cultural, political, economic and religious questions at its core. Gender conflicts are battles that feminist theory is good for women’s rights. In current literary theory, feminists are activists that were started by women almost all over the world. Jane has been depicted in the novel as a naïve and unknown poor girl from her own class but she was someone with no one else to depend on.

The novelist also made everyone a victim of Jane wherever she lived but turned her into somebody who was useful to others. Jane had to fight against the past traditions which almost made her freedom and independence not significant in her life and societies.

#### • **Equality of Gender in division of Labor**

Human rights must be extended to men and women alike. It is necessary that the portion should be equal, no more, no less. The right to life achieves dignity. Some of the rights of women that have been widely discussed revolve around issues such as a career woman or working woman especially in relation to their education.

Talking about gender differences brings to mind times when men viewed women as objects to be owned and controlled. That was just the opposite of what happened with females compared to males during those times.

Men can study up to university level. They can also leave the house at will. This is why it can be seen as a male preserve of education and public life during those times. Female Emancipation is clear cut, it means one

thing only. That woman is a man. This definition is quite wrong indeed.

Also, the social environment ought to comprehend completely concerning gender equality. Primarily, Men and Women have their own definitions in life. What women do cannot mean that men are irrelevant in their duties. On the other hand, women too have to face some responsibilities with regards to career and family life Whichever angle they look at it from.

*“ladies feel fair as men feel; they require work out for their resources, and a field for their endeavors, as much as their brothers do; accurately as*

*men would endure; and it is narrow-minded in their more favored fellow- creatures to say that they need to keep themselves to making puddings and sewing leggings.*

*It is neglectful to sentence them, or chuckle at them, in case they look for to do more or learn more than custom has articulated essential for their sex”*

## 4.2. Discussions

In this study, multiple aspects of the arising issue presented and these include gender equality. However, the authors found out that there is an issue of gender equity regarding education. Education is the most important issue or strong injustice of those days. The problem on the women has always been unfair. However, men think that women are not educated. This is the tale of Jane’s life. Jane had pressure from school leaders but she never lost strength or became depressed and drawn out in sorrow. A highly educated woman shows improvement in vertical mobility of socioeconomic status. The science of will also has to grow and develop, women should be a self-identity.

Second, researchers discuss gender fairness in the issue of male dominance. In that time, the society was under male influence and Jane had to find a solution in making difficult situations manageable. Life during that time very much reflected gender equality itself because men were still ruling the roost in most areas of life. Jane does her best to provide the women with similar gender equality as men of those days.

Thirdly, the researcher discusses Portrayal of Jane as Feminism and Independent Woman. Researchers found that Jane is a feminism nature. Jane challenges the old mores, male dominance patriarchy as an institution of a reign where men rule over women. Jane had to fight in her life so that she can oppose the old practice so as they gets a free and independent person along with their lives and communities.

Fourth, equality by gender in the employment sector. The problem of gender equality in the workplace has taken place since ancient times. In her writings, Jane is vehemently opposed to anything wrong or equal rights between men and women. Jane is a woman who dreams about an independent life outside man and learns to fight for the destinies of her environment women. Women are presented in the novel as working women, and they deserve equal opportunities just like men. Men also want to develop their talents or skills and women have the same desire. Jane believes that women can be able to do whatever men are doing.

## 4.3. Conclusion

Jane Eyre as a woman can make herself free without any doubt there according to the findings from study and discussion, author concludes. This evidence proves that Jane Eyre may appear as the intellectual and independent woman able to avoid any kinds of constraints related with women, racism against them within society; inequality in respect for her people along with general principles where men were dominant over. For instance, it can be seen that Jane Eyre was a free character by taking into consideration the choices she made. She decides to abandon the ones who place her in unpleasant circumstances. In this story, the author revealed how Jane could surmount a difficult situation in that time.

However, at the end of everything Jane is able to make it prove that women are on equal grounds with Male. The novels of Jane Eyre will similarly contain problems such as ways in which the writer, Charlotte Bronte may reach out to her readers; how lonely she is and therefore working so hard trying to find herself a partner.

4 are neutral about the central figure in this research, researchers who concentrate their attention mainly on gender equality attributes of education. As far as the movement of feminism is spreading to all countries which where literature pretends quite willingly on how much this idea can determine an author; it may be interpreted in what way a certain character from one's story.

A story character reflection that undergoes some kind of movement, you can take it as feminism. she struggles to free herself from order and fights for equal rights. the likes of jane. The image of feminism in Jane is clearly reflected through stories shared within the novel. Jane as a self-independent, strong and brave woman was considered to be fighter for her people but also against many problems including old traditions of the society or even male supremacy in those days.

The way equality relationships have been attained in connections between men and women. It means that women were there but as objects, the ones who has always been oppressed. Or those who are at their leisure on equal grounds with men, whether we speak of or subjects of subordination have risen as equals. Therefore, they are equal in the relationship without any dominating or subordination. Equality or abilities hard work, sacrifice potential and intellectual personality to women certainly makes it possible for them to emerge as people equal in status with men. All that made women to perfect their possibilities. Thus, Jane Eyre in those days proved her talents and power as a feminist of emancipation to such an extent that women were capable of being presented there both from society point and his voice.

To sum it up, such an inquiry shows how the feminist ideas have been explored in two classical fictions adapted for the stage, "Jane Eyre" and "Little Women." The study builds on a feminist perspective rooted in Engels through Narwoko and Suyanto (2010); this serves as a guide through gender role formation. Cultural, religious and state structures serve to reinforce socialization. For instance, the curriculum used by the Ministry of Women Empowerment is related to the overall theme of equality; this is achieved by creating a balance in terms of opportunities while getting rid of structural injustices that are based on discrimination.

An example of literary analysis is Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte. Bronte's novel depicts her independent and brave personality which defies patriarchy system that emphasizes gender equality and individualism. In conclusion, Bronte's work is understood through various studies including those done by Dr. B. Janaki and Cristina Budeanu that collectively present feminist theory as multifaceted while exploring historical, social and cultural aspects within it.

This research extends to include theatrical adaptations, which are "Jane Eyre – A New Musical" by Jay Richards and "Little Women – A Comedy in Four Acts" by Marian de Forest. The hypothesis posits whether these adaptations challenge or adhere to patriarchal systems through exploring adaptation's contextual nuances, the major women characters therein, as well as thematic explorations of motherhood, marriage, housekeeping and gender identity.

Looking into Richard's version of Jane Eyre, the context involves historical shifts that include the evolution of feminist empowerment. The musical genre being rooted in democracy theater system becomes a platform for discussing feministic ideas. Various critical issues such as marriage, family, women's place in the society; gender roles and motherhood all are discussed to expose the moral values developed by Richards for feminism.

On the other hand, when we turn to "Little Women," we can examine historical and literary contexts of Alcott's novel and De Forest's adaptation. The Gilded Age era characterized by science advancement and feminism growth is an important period for examining gender dynamics. From melodramatic settings to realistic traditions: De Forest's adaptation set against a background of industrialization, imperialism and beginnings of transformations in feminist thought represents a shift.

The utilized methodology is qualitative description that used Allison M Jagar's feminist theory for analysis. The findings reveal issues concerning gender equality in education, the fight against male dominance, how Jane Eyre represents a feminist and an independent person as well as problem on gender concerns at work place. Overall, this research reveals the changing dynamic of feminism in literature and theater as it investigates cultural constructions of gender roles and relations.



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